2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese

641 The essential nature of the overseas Chinese is, however, one thing: the traits of their character brought out by subjection to differing pressures and influences are another. In particular, the larger part of the area has for a long period been under the domination of European colonial Powers which, in spite of recent developments, to a considerable degree still maintain their hold. In the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, British Borneo, and Indochina the Chinese have been subordinated to the colonial policies of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, France, and the United States. In Siam, the solitary country to retain independence throughout (though she, too, was moulded by pressures from the West), the Chinese immigrants contributed to the well-being of the Siamese by their services and the admixture of their blood, but it was always the native aristocracy that held the power and, since 1932, the middle-class native revolutionaries. In post-liberation Burma the Chinese are a small minority who must leave the issues to be decided amongst the Burmese parties and communities; in Indonesia they are often uncomfortably at the point of impact of the opposing forces; in Indochina their plight is much the same. In Malaya the upshot of constitutional experiment and the campaign of Communist terrorists of their own race has placed them in a dilemma.

641 Throughout most of the period of our survey it has been a tenet
471 of the Chinese that they should leave political policy and adminis-
668 tration to the local Government, and this remains so in principle in spite of the increasing influence of nationalism and, latterly, of Communism in their midst. The outworn, but still, until recently, serviceable dictum that 'the Chinese don't mind who holds the cow so long as they milk it' has been true of all purely mercantile communities since the dawn of history, and virtually the same remark is indeed made by Communists of capitalism—that it does not mind who governs so long as it draws the profits. But with the growth of the Chinese communities in the Nanyang and the development within them of political awareness the saying has been becoming less and less true.

641 From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century the Chinese in Southeast Asia found themselves, first in the Philippines, next
•636 in Indonesia, then in Malaya, and finally in Indochina, called upon to adapt themselves to a superstructure of government devised by completely strange and alien nations. These nations

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese

were almost entirely uninterested in them except as traders, labourers, or agents for dealing with the native peoples. In the last capacity the Chinese were very useful, for they had a knowledge of native ways which the Europeans lacked and in any case had no leisure to gain, being occupied so much of their time in warfare among themselves. The Chinese, in their turn, were interested in these white barbarians only to the extent that it was expedient to know their peculiarities. They showed themselves, however, much more adaptable to learning about the white race than the Europeans did to learning about them, for, generally speaking, the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, and the French were almost completely ignorant of the Chinese language and *mores*, and the Chinese were happy that it should be so. Another reason for the failure of Europeans to acquire any real knowledge of the people among whom they lived was that for the European life in the tropics—at any rate from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century—was short, and he either returned home with a competence within a few years or else perished. Thus it was found convenient by the Company and early colonial Governments to leave the conduct of their community affairs to the Chinese headmen, except in the more serious cases, and this gave the Chinese much liberty of action. Unfortunately the fears of the tiny minority such as were the Europeans, especially in face of the increasing numbers of the Chinese, put them in a very anxious and suspicious frame of mind. The Chinese ethos, usually so serene, was subject to occasional social squalls or typhoons when the community was seized with mass hysteria. This was really only a means of dispersal of an accumulation of real or imaginary grievances and the trouble subsided, if handled with reason and tolerant firmness, almost as quickly as it had arisen. But in the minds of the Europeans with their tiny garrisons the outbreaks were often interpreted as signs of rebellion. Indeed in some cases they were rightly so interpreted, and there can be no doubt that when fear and distrust had dried up relationship into a tinder a spark would fire it into a rebellion, as was the case in Manila on St Francis's Eve 1603, when things had gone so far that it was either the Chinese or the Spanish who had to be destroyed. It is equally certain that a greater degree of understanding on either side would have averted this and later disasters.

Whilst thus simplifying the situation, it must be conceded that